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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Thursday, November 20, 1930.

1-9  
In 3/4h  
Housekeepers' Chat

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Bringing the Kitchen up to Date". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Convenient Kitchens". "Operating a Home Heating Plant".

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Planning for a holiday gathering of one's relatives always makes one aware of the shortcomings of the kitchen, doesn't it? At least, that's the way I feel. And I have a friend, Arabella, who expressed the same thought when she came over last week and asked me to tell her what was wrong with her kitchen.

"All the cousins and aunts are coming for Thanksgiving dinner, Aunt Sammy," she said, "and the kitchen is terrible. It's so inconvenient, and hasn't any of the right things to work with. Please give me some suggestions."

I told Arabella that her first duty was to arrange her stove, table, and sink, so that she wouldn't need to take such/long trip, every time she prepared a meal, and washed the dishes. Next, she should have her working surfaces raised, because the sink and the table were both too low for her. Her kitchen was poorly lighted; I suggested that she hang another light over the sink. I also suggested that she get a high stool, and save her strength by sitting down to some of her kitchen work.'

I'm not very fond of giving people advice. Did I hear somebody laugh? I mean particular people, and specific advice. Yes, I know I give lots of advice over the radio, but really, I'm just passing on some of the helpful ideas I meet every day, that I simply can't keep to myself.

I advised Arabella to make a survey of her kitchen equipment, and get rid of a few of the old heirlooms she had been keeping house with. Then I said to look around in the stores and see for herself what was new in kitchen tools. Last night she called me up. So I went right over.

"Come on in," she greeted me cheerfully. "Come in, Aunt Sammy, and see what wonders I've performed."

"Your talk must have made me 'kitchen-conscious,'" she said. "After I'd



made all the big improvements you suggested, I began replacing the broken-down tools I'd been using for these many years. I bought a long-handled dustpan, to save my back, and a dish drainer, to save time. Then I bought a long-handled mop, a garbage can with a tight cover; and a small garbage drainer for the corner of the sink, so I wouldn't have to open the garbage can every few minutes.

"I'm overwhelmed," I said, and I meant it."

"Just wait," said Arabella, "you haven't heard anything yet. Remember the old egg-beater -- the one you made fun of? It had a miserable little metal handle, with a knob about the size of a small peanut, and every once in a while the cogs would slip, and I'd say things no lady should even think. My new egg-beater has a comfortable wooden handle with a knob which fits my hand. The cogs are well-protected, too, so that they can't catch in the dish towel.

"The next thing I bought was a frying basket, for deep-fat frying. It has a wooden handle, instead of the usual wire bail which gets so hot. I bought a food chopper, too, one with an adjustable knife-head, which can be set with a lever to cut coarse, medium, fine, or very fine.

"And my knives -- you ought to see the assortment: butcher knife, bread knife, and paring knives -- all with comfortable handles, and blades of stainless steel, which is not affected by acids.

"See my flour sifter? It sifts flour eight times, in two operations -- like this. And look at my cake pan, round corners, instead of the old kind with seams in it. Lots easier to clean. What else do I have to show you? My kitchen shears, and a wire brush for cleaning pots and pans. A new can opener. Kitchen scales.

"And my measuring tools, I'm not a genius, when it comes to cooking, and I need to measure things carefully. So I bought a quart measure and two measuring cups -- one for measuring dry things, like flour, and another, of heat-proof glass, for measuring liquids. You'll notice that my glass measuring cup has the cup measure marked a quarter of an inch below the top; I can measure a whole cup, without spilling. Then I have measuring spoons, ranging in size from one-quarter teaspoon to onetablespoon.

"Thermometers next. Two thermometers, Aunt Sammy, can you beat that? One for use in the oven -- that's a great help in baking; and one for use in roasting meats.

"And that is not all," she continued. "I mean to have one of these new-fangled dish mops, a plate scraper, a small brush, a long-handled pot cleaner and a soap shaker, so that dish-washing will not be such drudgery. I intend to have all the tools I need, in the places I need them, Aunt Sammy."





"I can see your Thanksgiving dinner is going to be prepared with expedition and dispatch," I assured her. "And now I must run home as quickly as I can, for a man is coming to tell me how to get the best results with the new furnace."

The man was already there when I got back. I asked him a great many questions, and he gave me some good general pointers which can be applied to any kind of a furnace. So I'm going to pass them right on to my radio friends.

"I know that the moisture content in the air of a home is important," I said. "And I have an idea that one must know how to regulate his own heating plant, in order to get the best results. Isn't that true?"

"Absolutely," said the man that came about the furnace. "If you want to warm a house at low cost, you've got to know how to operate your heater. It isn't enough merely to install a heater -- fill the bins with coal -- and then haul out the ashes. Nor can you expect efficiency from your heater if you let some one who hasn't any interest in heaters -- or your coal bill -- work on your furnace. Eliminate the waste. Use every bit of heat locked up in every pound of coal that goes into your furnace. The ash can should contain nothing burnable. It's possible to maintain the right temperature for comfort by burning a certain quantity of coal. To burn more than that, is pure waste. The average house-owner burns altogether too much coal."

"The best results in firing are obtained when you place light material in the fire-bed first," he said. "Then put the heavier wood on that, and finally the coal."

He told me never to let the fire burn hot and cold -- that is, vary from one extreme to the other. The fire should get regular attention throughout the day. "Study your fire," he said.

"Buy at least 2 kinds of coal at one time. Then study the results you get. Notice if one kind fires quickly and seems to produce an even heat. See which kind burns longest. See how much ash each kind leaves.

"A fire shouldn't be shaken down more than 3 times a day. Twice a day is still better. Don't shake too much. Never shake live coals through the grate. And never leave ashes under the grate in the ash pit. Clean them out as soon as you shake them down. It's a good idea to sprinkle them to lay the dust.

"Don't disturb the fire with a poker, or by shaking, if it will catch and burn up in time anyhow.

"Here's a tip on banking the fire at night, before you go to bed. When the fire is to be closed down for the night -- after you have thrown on fresh coal, or banked it with ashes -- close the check damper and open the draft damper. Give the fire time to stop giving off gases. That is, leave the dampers that way until the fire has stopped giving the gases off. You can judge that by the blue flames sprouting up over the fire bed.





Then close the direct damper and open the check and feed-door dampers.  
You'll have to learn the best way to do these things for your own  
furnace, and for different kinds of weather."

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Friday: Choosing the Thanksgiving Turkey.

